Solar ™& ©1993 Western Publishing, Inc., ARR.

Looking Ahead With Valiant Vision

It's been a few weeks since the first Valiant Vision book hit the stands—along with the ***Valiant Vision Starter Kit*** that included a pair of Valiant Vision glasses—and there's one thing that almost every comic fan agrees on: there has never been a more effective 3-D system in the comics field. Sell-outs of both the ***Valiant Vision Starter Kit*** and ***Solar, Man of the Atom #29*** (the first Valiant Vision release) are reported across the nation, and fans are clamoring wondering when they'll see another Valiant Vision release. Some fans are so 3-D-hungry that they're already using their Valiant Vision glasses on other comics (here at ***CSN,*** we've discovered that there are some pretty keen "found" 3-D covers on recent ***Donald Duck*** comics, for instance).

Well, here's a Valiant Vision alert: ***Solar, Man of the Atom #33,*** the first installment of a three-issue story arc that takes Solar the Destroyer to the spider-aliens' homeworld, will be presented in stunning Valiant Vision. In fact, all three installments of the "Solar the Destroyer" storyline will be produced in Valiant Vision, making for some pretty deep reading indeed! ***Solar, Man of the Atom #33,*** a $2.25 comic, is scheduled for February release. And if you missed out on your ***Valiant Vision Starter Kit*** the first time, you can remedy he situation in February, when Valiant reissues the kit along with ***Solar #33.***

(And now the question of the issue: what interesting 3-D covers have *you* discovered while wearing your Valiant Vision glasses as you scan the comic shop racks? Send us your nominations for the best "found" 3-D comic to: ***Valiant Vision Bonus, c/o Comic Shop News,*** 2339 Milstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066. The person who submits the best entry (as chosen by our intrepid judges) will receive a foil-logo Valiant collector's edition. Oh, yeah—remember, we're on a budget, so don't send us looking for ultra-expensive Golden Age or Key Silver Age books, okay?...)

by CLIFF BIGGERS

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Caddies, Dinosaurs Are Topps In Comics Field

Mark Schultz's ***Xenozoic Tales*** has made the jump from comics to animated television via CBS's ***Cadillacs & Dinosaurs***—and early in 1994, it's jumping right back to comics again courtesy of Topps Comics.

Mark Schultz, the artist and creator of Xenozoic Tales, will continue to produce that series for Kitchen Sink Press—but the animated series that based on his creation has inspired the new ***Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*** comic books, and some monster talents from the comics field are signing up to handle the creative honors.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs, a three-issue limited series debuting in early February of '94, is produced with the full cooperation of Mark Schultz; by the time the comic book series debuts, Tyco's toy line should be on the shelves, making the public even more aware of the series. Furthermore, CBS is moving the series to an earlier morning timeslot, which should mean that network affiliates that thus far haven't carried the series in its regular time slot (or haven't carried it at all) will air the episodes at their designated time. The end result is an enormous potential audience for this series, which is set in the Xenozoic Age... a time when humans and dinosaurs coexist.

The new series features lead stories written by Roy Thomas and illustrated by Dick Giordano. This is Giordano's first major art job since retiring from DC Comics. In the lead story, major problems ensue for Jack and Hannah's relationship when Hannah's recklessness results in the destruction of Jack's Cadillac and threatens the life of Felicia, Dr. Fessenden's daughter. The series will also feature six-page backup stories detailing the origin of the Xenozoic Age as told by Roy Thomas land Rich Buckler.

Cadillac & Dinosaurs #1 will be released in two editions: a deluxe $2.95 edition with a foil-enhanced cover by dinosaur artist par excellence William Stout, and a standard $2.50 edition featuring a cover by Dick Giordano..

by KIM B. PEARSON

Maggin Goes For the Goldenrod ... Twice!

Elliott S! Maggin, the writer whose work on ***Green Arrow*** and ***Superman*** in the 1970's and 1980's made him one of the better-known superhero writers of the period, is returning to the sort of adventure he does best with two new series, ***Goldenrod*** and ***Goldenrod Retro.***

According to Maggin, ***Goldenrod*** is the story of "what these costumed guys are really like... told from the point of view of someone who has worked closely with them all his adult life." The hero, Goldenrod, is in reality Rally York, the son of an alien demigod and a young summer camp counselor who fell in love with this mighty being. When the alien departed, he left behind a disappointed, pregnant young woman... and a son who would turn out to be immortal—and perpetually adolescent.

According to Maggin, York is a young man who "has the intellect of Stephen Hawking and the emotional stability of Pee-Wee Herman... insists on pushing the buttons whenever he gets into an elevator... always saves his frosting for last. At the age of twenty-six, he looks seventeen and still wants to hang with his buddies from high school who now all have jobs and lives and think he should get on with his."

In a rather unique approach, the publisher, Reoccurring Images, is launching both series with a single book: ***Goldenrod #0.*** After this book's February debut, ***Goldenrod*** will move forward beginning with ***Goldenrod #1,*** while ***Goldenrod Retro*** will count backwards, moving from the zero issue to ***Goldenrod Retro #-1*** and so on. The Retro series will tell the story of Goldenrod's career year-by-year in reverse order, ending with ***Goldenrod Retro #-25.***

Goldenrod #0, a February release priced at $2.95, is illustrated by Ken Tucker, who served as the storyboard artist for ***RoboCop III*** and worked with the syndicated ***Conan*** animated series.

by WAYNE LEE

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COMIC SHOP NEWS™
12 • 22 • 93
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Blackgate Offers No Asylum

Arkham Asylum was destroyed during "Knightfall"—so where does Gotham keep the villains who escaped from Arkham during that struggle and now can't "go home"? Until Arkham can be rebuilt, the only place to keep such deadly villains as Two-Face, the Scarecrow, the Riddler, Mad Hatter, and Poison Ivy is Blackgate Prison... but the occupants of that prison aren't too happy with their "guests." The conflict between the permanent and the temporary prisoners is the focus of "Madmen Across the Water," the lead story in ***Showcase '94 #3***. *Alan Grant, Tim Sale,* and *Jimmy Palmiotti* handle the creative honors on this offbeat tale. ***Showcase '94 #3*** also features a solo adventure of Razorsharp and the Psyba-rats from this year's ***Robin Annual***, courtesy of *Chuck Dixon, Howard Porter,* and *Mark Stegbauer,* and part two of a three-part Blue Beetle story by *Brian Augustyn, Patrick Rolo,* and *Dick Giordano*. *Mike Mignola* supplies the eye-catching cover for this issue of ***Showcase '94;*** look for it on January 27th.

A Heavenly Doc Savage Release

With the release of the *Bob Larkin* Doc Savage print in January, you may have thought that Graphitti s deluxe *James Bama* Doc Savage print series had come to an end. Wrong! The eighth print, ***Sea Angel,*** is slated for February release in a deluxe 150-copy signed edition priced at $125 and a 950-copy unsigned edition priced at $29.95. With the recent release of the Bantam hardcover ***The Art of James Bama,*** signed prints by this acclaimed artist are more in demand than ever (and when you compare the price of these prints to his Western art, which can command prices in the thousands of dollars for a signed print, we're talking a bargain here!...). If you re interested in either edition, reserve a copy with the folks at your local comic shop ASAP.

Marvel Makes Uncanny Move Into Ashcans

In recent years, most ashcan editions have been either photocopy releases from smaller publishers who wanted to get advance copies of their books into the marketplace, or promotional copies of comics distributed in a variety of magazines. In early '94, though, Marvel Comics makes it possible for every fan to add an ashcan premiere to his or her collection with the release of ashcan editions of some of their hottest first issues. In early January, Marvel will release a 16-page ashcan of ***Force Works #1***; in early February, fans can latch onto an ashcan of ***War Machine #1***. Each of the ashcans will carry a bargain price of 75¢, and each will precede the release of the standard edition of the title by a week. If fan response is positive, Marvel plans to release other ashcan editions throughout '94—and if you don't want to miss any of these ashcans, you might see about reserving copies at your local comic shop—and tell 'em that you heard about it in ***CSN,*** okay?...

Marvel Unshrouds a New Limited Series

The Shroud, the popular supporting character from the pages of ***Web of Spider-Man,*** becomes a star in his own right in early '94 with the release of his own four-issue limited series. In this new series by *Mike Barr, M.C. Wyman,* and *Malcolm Jones III,* the Shroud relocates from Los Angeles to New York City in order to track down the Cult of Kali, the "family" that abandoned him years before. Once he arrives, he discovers that the Mob and the Cult are working together for evil purposes, and he joins forces with Spider-Man to combat both evil factions... as well as the Scorpion, who makes their job a little more difficult.

The Shroud #1, a $1.75 comic, is scheduled for January 13th release.

CSNsider

Dark Horse has a second round of weekly ***Comics' Greatest World*** books slated for summer '94 release; same weekly format, same $1 16-page books, but a shorter schedule... ***The Black Cat*** is earning her own limited series next spring... Look for new ***Captain Harlock*** adventures in mid-94... ***Ghost Rider*** joins the 2099 lineup in March... Interest is increasing in the long-discussed Oliver Stone ***Elektra*** film... The popularity of the Elseworlds format has DC pondering a series of Elseworlds-oriented annuals for next year... Marvel has secured the rights to a variety of Disney films, including ***Aladdin, Little Mermaid,*** and ***Beauty and the Beast***, and will be producing new comics series based on the properties; additionally, look for Marvel to handle the comic book adaptation honors for upcoming Disney films like ***The Lion King.*** An anthology book based on the Disney afternoon series (***Darkwing Duck, Talespin,*** and ***Goof Troop***) is also planned... Skybox's ***Sandman Trading Cards,*** originally slated for December release, have been pushed back to late February... You can expect to see Marvel make an entry into the cold-cast porcelain figure market in '94, replacing their discontinued line of ceramic bisques... Valiant has a ***Magnus: Robot Fighter*** spin-off entitled ***Starwatchers*** set for summer '94 debut; it'll be followed later in the year by Valiant's last new series for a while, ***The Visitor*** (these two will join the already announced ***Timewalker*** and ***Armorines*** as Valiant's only '94 ongoing-series rollouts)... If you've been looking for ***Sachs & Violens #3*** without success, it's no surprise; the Peter *David-George Perez* series has been put on hiatus, and the second issue won't see print any earlier than next March... *A.C. Farley*'s ***Bioneers,*** originally announced as part of Mirage's Next Comics fall rollout, is tentatively rescheduled for spring '94 rollout... Marvel's in-the-works ***Marvel Milestones*** tributes to the two-in-one books of yesteryear (***Tales To Astonish, Tales of Suspense, Strange Tales***) are ready to go; look for the fully painted bookshelf-format books in the spring... *Frank Miller* is definitely on board as the writer of the ***Spawn-Batman*** crossover book... Spider-Man and X-Factor are co-starring in a limited series by *Kurt Busiek* and *Pat Broderick;* look for it in the spring... ***The Lone Ranger*** is ready to ride into comic shops in the near future, with a ***Hex***-ed creative team... The second wave of Razorline books is already in production; look for more offbeat superhero tales and lotsa metaphysical mysticism, of course... Word has it that the 1970's Atlas heroes are ever-closer to making their return—and '94 could be the year that it happens!... ***Mars Attacks!*** will become a comic book limited series courtesy of Topps... With ***Deadpool*** and ***Gambit*** having done particularly well in this fall's limited series, don't be surprised to see 'em both return next year in more solo action... Is there a new Azrael in the works, now that the old Azreal is busy playing Batman?...

Second Call for Beck & Caul

A few months back, we told you about Caliber Press's upcoming ***Beck & Caul*** series—but as the astute among you have noticed, the book never made it to the comic shop racks. Well, you can add it to your shopping lists once again, because this series about a pair of psychic investigators has been added to Caliber's early '94 release schedule. The storyline remains the same, but there is one change in the art department: *Brooke Kowalski* has signed on as inker for the book. ***Beck & Caul #1,*** a $2.95 comic, is scheduled to hit the comic shop racks in late January.

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NEW WARRIORS #44

NAMORITA GETS A CASE OF THE BLUES

When Namorita left the New Warriors, she was depressed. Now she's blue... literally! Does the change only go skin deep or has her mind been affected as well? Count on Fabian Nicieza, Darick Robertson, and Larry Mahlstedt to give the full prognosis. Look to the fabulous photo cover for your first glimpse at the new Namorita.

PUNISHER 2099 #13

THE FRAUGHT-FILLED FUTURISTIC FINALE!

The "Fall of the Hammer" crossover finishes here! And the lives of 2099's heroes may end with it unless Jake Gallows and Spidey 2099 can prevent the destruction of Valhalla and the deaths of millions! All this and the final fate of the New Asgardians! Written by Pat Mills and Tony Skinner with art by Tom Morgan and Jimmy Palmiotti.

VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN #1 OF 3

THE NIGHT DEMONS OVERRAN SAN FRAN!

It's symbiotic suspense as you like it when Venom faces supernatural tricks that are no treat. San Francisco has been overrun by a horde of demons and Morbius and Demogoblin are only making matters worse! Bruce Jones and Bob McLeod face the Lethal Protector with his most deadly challenge! Featuring a glow-in-the dark cover.

STARBLAST

FANTASTIC FOUR #385

UNDERWATER WARFARE!

Ant Man officially joins the FF, making them Four once more! But they're still gonna need help in the form of Namor's sea-spawned strength to defeat a Starblaster super threat deep in the Atlantic! Part 7 of the "Starblast" crossover is by Tom DeFalco, Paul Ryan, and Dan Bulanadi.

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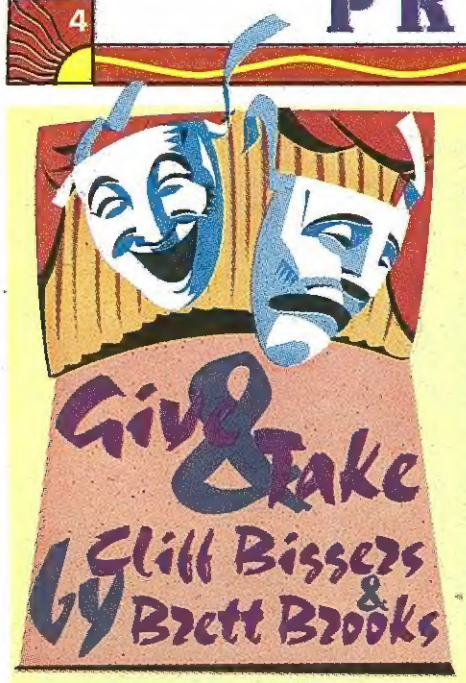
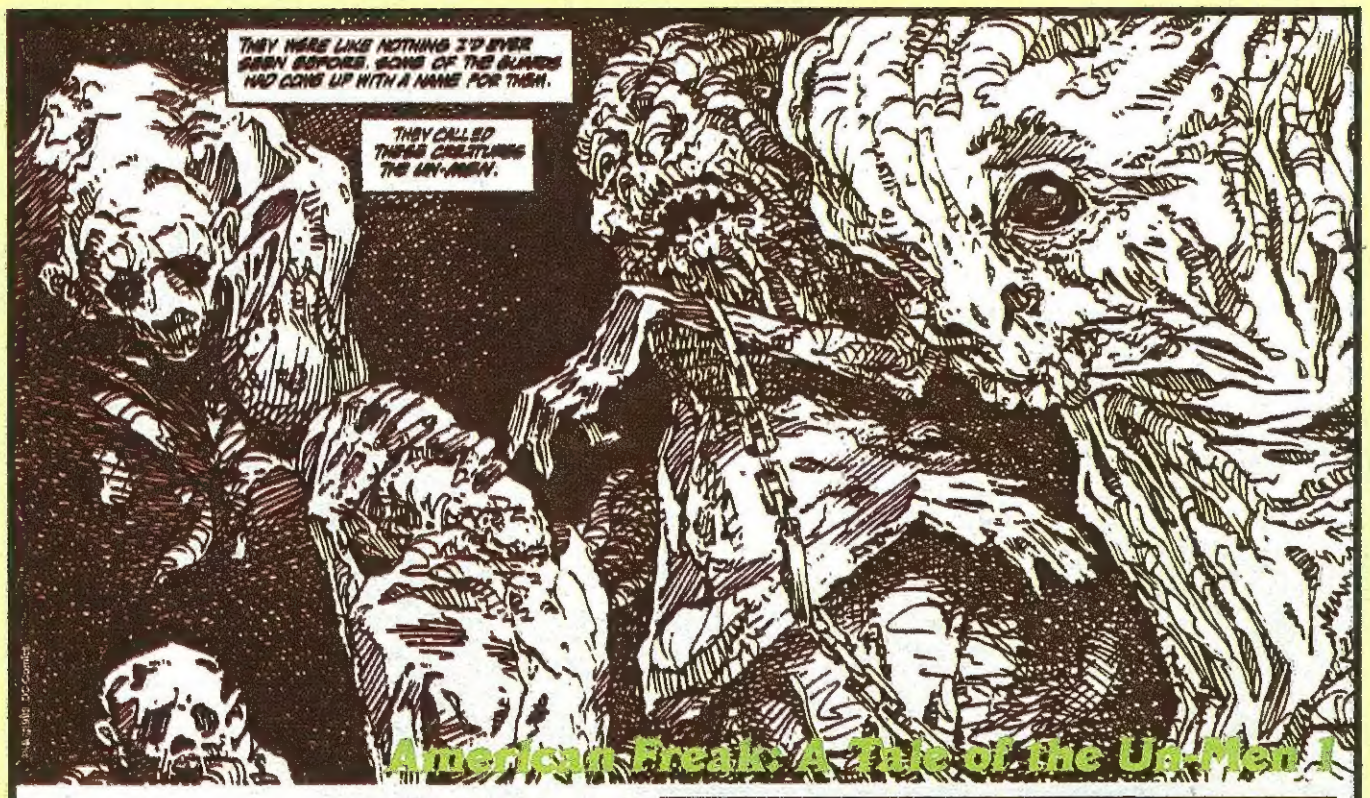


Each month, Cliff Biggers (in plain type) and Brett Brooks (*in italic type*) take a look at a few choice comics scheduled for release in the next few weeks. Publishers interested in having their books considered for review in this feature should send copies to ***CSN Give & Take, 2339 Milstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066.*** We'd prefer receiving copies of the books at least thirty days before they're scheduled to reach comic shops. Enough business—let's talk comics!

With this issue, by popular request, we're also adding, at the end of the reviews, a one to five rating scale for each book, with both Brett's and Cliff's ratings listed. Since we make a point to only devote space to books that we think deserve the attention, this will enable readers to get an idea just how much Brett and Cliff like each book. Here's the basic scale:

★	Pick it up only if you must have something to read
★★	Moderately entertaining, but a bit predictable
★★★	Good stuff, worth a close look
★★★★	Primo reading; don't pass it up
★★★★★	You don't find comics better than this; *creme de la creme*


THEY WERE LIKE NOTHING I'D EVER SEEN BEFORE. SOME OF THE GUARDS HAD COME UP WITH A NAME FOR THEM.
THEY CALLED THESE CREATURES THE UN-MEN.

American Freak: A Tale of the Un-Men 1
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett:★★★

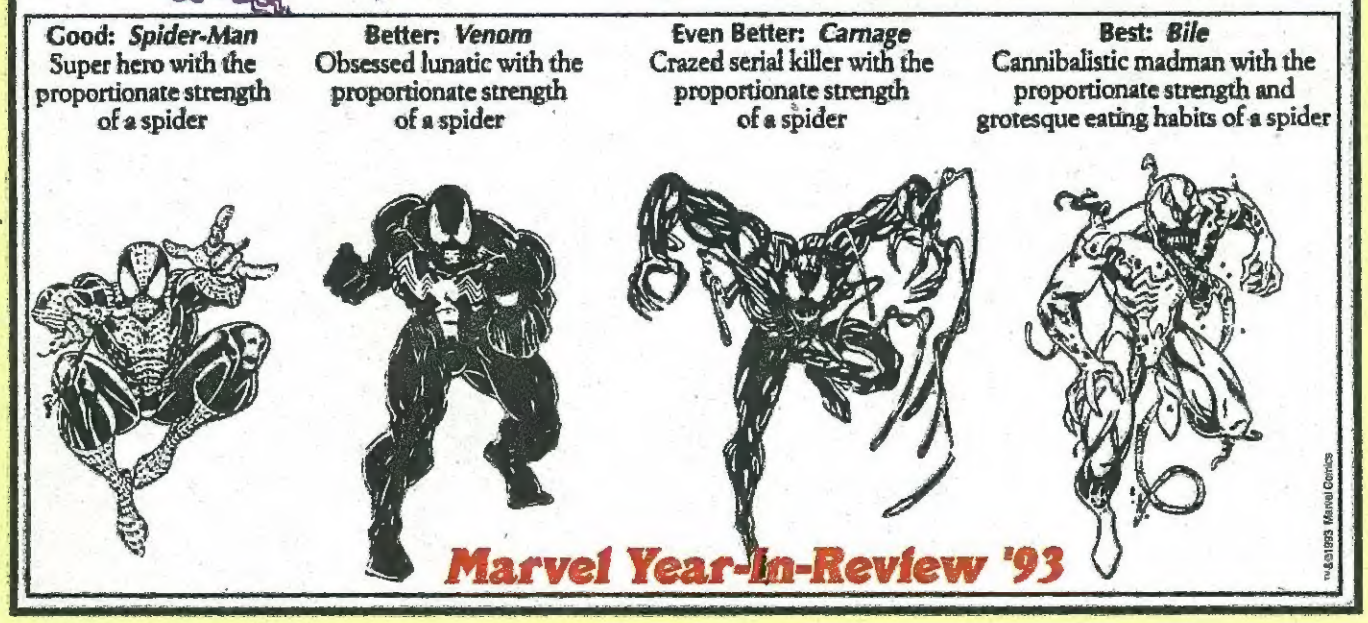
American Freak: A Tale of the Un-Men is, on some levels, reminiscent of Clive Barker's *Cabal*—the novella that inspired the film *Nightbreed*—but where the focus of Barker's novel was on the struggle between humans and the monstrous inhabitants of Midian, the emphasis of Dave Louapre and Vince Locke's ***American Freak*** is on the individual who has to deal with the knowledge that his entire life has been a lie... a lie that may soon be coming to an end...

Damien Kane, the reluctant star of this limited series, has been raised by the army ever since his parents died when he was very young. Shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday, however, a strange illness brings him back to the place where he was born, where he meets Dr. David Manguy, the man responsible for bringing him into the world. Manguy reveals to Kane that the story of his parents' death was a ruse designed to create a background for him; actually, Kane is the result of an experiment involving genetic manipulation of twisted creatures known as the Un-Men. Every other experiment died shortly after birth; Kane survived, however, and appeared to be totally human. Now it appears that his human form wasn't permanent after all; Kane is gradually reverting to his true Un-Man nature.

The story, with its heavy overtones of paranoia and manipulation, is an extremist-existentialist fantasy; Kane is a man totally isolated from the world around him, even before he discovers his true nature. Like Camus' stranger, he seems strangely dispassionate and detached, and he only begins to find his true place in life once he embraces the alienation that seemed vaguely troubling early in the first issue of the series. Like Barker's Boone in ***Cabal,*** Kane seems driven by a need to find a place where he belongs... even if it's a place where monsters dwell.

This story also seems to touch on the idea that man exists beyond his external form. It seems rather obvious that there are statements being made in this

FWOOM
SIVANA
THAT'S IT-- I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
CAPTAIN BLUNDER STRIKES AGAIN! THEY'RE GOING TO RUN ME OUT OF TOWN!
OR WORSE-- MAYBE I ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ONE OF THOSE CROOKS?
THAT STUPID WIZARD RUINED MY LIFE! I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANY OF THIS!
I'M NOT A HERO-- I'M JUST A DUMB KID!
I'VE GOT TO GO BACK TO THAT SUBWAY TUNNEL... AND FIND SHAZAM!
Power of Shazam


Good: Spider-Man
Super hero with the proportionate strength of a spider
Better: Venom
Obsessed lunatic with the proportionate strength of a spider
Even Better: Carnage
Crazed serial killer with the proportionate strength of a spider
Best: Bile
Cannibalistic madman with the proportionate strength and grotesque eating habits of a spider
Marvel Year-In-Review '93

book as to our obsession with the exterior appearance in society. Dr. Manguy goes to great length to point out to Kane that he is of a lineage that is noble by their design, if not by their deed and act. Kane's "father" seeks redemption for his earlier acts through his "son," and prophesies the son's greatness—and possible immortality—at more than one point in the tale.

But the greatness is a perverted greatness. Not to push the Clive Barker comparison too far, but this is nobility and greatness in the same way that Frank is seeking to attain the "pleasure" of new experiences in Hellraiser; it wouldn't be called "pleasure" by most people...

*Nevertheless, **American Freak** is a story that reminds me of an inverted **Ugly American**, or maybe even a transfixed **Metamorphosis**. This is a story of society as much as it is of individuals.*

Vince Locke's fine-line artwork seems to emphasis the fragile nature of Damien Kane's existence. Even his monstrous Un-Men lack the massive bulk of Wrightson's monstrous creatures; instead, they have a delicacy that makes them sympathetic creatures. Locke's line-work here is very evocative, perfectly suited to this Vertigo series. I'm glad that Vertigo offers a home to artists and writers who don't fit into the superhero mold; I'd hate to imagine someone like Vince Locke forced to conform to some company's superhero standards.

American Freak: Tales of the Un-Men is one of the most personal series Vertigo has produced—and it's also the first Vertigo series in quite a while that led me to empathize with the protagonist. That's one of the series' strongest points; it appeals to every reader who ever felt, at one time or another, like he didn't fit in (and doesn't that include most of us?)...

S.T.A.T. #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett:★★★★

*I now hold the second ongoing comic from Majestic Comics in my hands. You might remember me telling you to go out and buy **Legacy** about a month ago. I hope that you did—but even if you didn't, please go out and buy **S.T.A.T.**, because it's even better!*

*Sometimes I feel like I don't know what's happening in the comics field any more. It seemed like only yesterday that, in order to find a good superhero comic, you had to go to one of the Big Two, but times certainly have changed. Majestic Comics has taken the experience and knowledge of creators who have put in their time working for Marvel and DC, putting them to use in creating a new universe. **Legacy** started that universe out with the best work I've seen from Tom Morgan, and now **S.T.A.T.** shows me some great work from some relative newcomers to the field.*

You're right on target, particularly concerning the artwork in both Majestic titles; they're not only getting the best work out of the creators who work for them, but they're also creating a dynamic house style that far surpasses most other companies who have recently entered the superhero field.

*S.T.A.T. is written by Fred Schiller, with art by the team of Hester and Sellers. Together, they have turned out a wonderfully solid super-hero comic. Basically, this is the story of the characters who weren't good enough to make it into **Legacy**. Honestly, that's the idea! This is the story of the group of Government heroes who won the lottery to be awarded powers, but then found out that they weren't going to be the ones chosen to replace Guardian. Simple, huh? Well, what these people weren't aware of was the toll that would be exacted upon them in exchange for their powers. How does that old saying go? "With great power comes great responsibility?..."*

The Government sure believes that to be true. They make it perfectly clear in this first issue that if you aren't with them, then you must not be using your power correctly, and are therefore, against them. So much for the land of the free. The first issue is told as a flashback in a letter that one of the members of S.T.A.T. is writing to an old friend, who didn't make the first lottery cut.

I enjoy the concept of "second-best heroes." In the Silver Age, I found the concept appealing when DC introduced the Legion of Substitute Heroes; here, we see the same concept handled in a much more serious way, and with contemporary sensibilities. Don't think that the book is too dark and serious, though; there's enough light humor to elicit a chuckle or two as well. The characters are funny at times in a very believable, human way; they aren't slapstick stereotypes.

The most intriguing character is a man who has gained super-powers, but decided not to run with the group. He is an outcast. A rebel. A farmer. He doesn't want to use his powers to fight for the Government, but he isn't going to fight against them either. He is a simple man who wants to live a simple life, and he's hoping that they'll let him.

The art is by the team of Hester and Sellers (unfortunately, Majestic didn't list first names in the photocopy they sent us), and to be honest, I don't know where they came from or who they are, but they're worth discovering.. They're experienced enough to know how to tell a dynamic story with clean , clear art. With a world that is churning out so many new books a month, it's difficult to find artists of this caliber.

It's the visuals that will give Majestic their best shot at being the next hot debut publisher in the superhero field. For the past couple of years, a lot of people have been hoping to follow Valiant's lead in establishing a strong readership for their books based on solid storytelling, good "hook" concepts, and vivid, stylish visuals. Majestic seems like the most likely newcomer publisher to achieve that status; their books are accessible and entertaining.

***S.T.A.T.** is reminiscent of **Legacy** in that there aren't any staggering ideas being presented in this book. What there is is a good, solid story, matched by good solid art. That's what I look for in comics, whether it's super-heroes or anything else, and **S.T.A.T.** makes the list.*

Marvel Year-In-Review '93
Cliff: ★★★
Brett:★★★

The problem with most humor comics nowadays is that they aren't funny. And that's a *big* problem...

If I never read another spoof of last month's hot comic book, I'll be quite happy. Spoofs aren't funny, for the most part; they generally present the same tired adolescent jokes that every reader can come up with within five minutes of hearing that a spoof is in the works, and they supplement it with uninspired artwork.

And that's why I really like ***Marvel Year-in-Review '93***.

First off, there isn't a single spoof of a recent-release comic book in the whole bunch. Instead, there's sarcastic, self-effacing humor that should have every Marvel reader laughing and nodding in agreement at the same time. Here, The funny stuff has a real edge, a David Letterman-esque irreverence that doesn't hold Marvel above criticism.

For instance, as a sidebar to Tom Brevoort and Mike Kanterovich's article about the popularity of bag guys, we have good/better/best, in which we have, for example, Wolverine ("savage killing machine with the soul of a samurai"), Sabretooth ("uncontrollable, savage killing machine with the attitude of a psychopath") and—in the best category—Clawjaw ("unhousebroken, uncontrollable killing machine with poor bodily hygiene"). Another feature pokes fun at Marvel's recent explosion of new characters, categorizing them in such groups as "Lame Name" and "Zero Imagination." And yet another feature helps readers keep track of the amazing assortment of all-too-similar supporting characters and villains in the X-books.

*I think that there are going to be several readers who don't understand that what you're describing **isn't** a spoof. Too many people use that term to describe anything that pokes fun at something else by pointing out its idiosyncrasies (such as the good, better, best that you describe).*

True; in this case, I should clarify that I'm using the word "spoof" in the ride-on-the-coattails-of-another's-success definition that too many publishers imply when they churn out books like ***Zagnuts, Robot Blighter*** or the like. And that's not at all what you find here; there's an appealing irreverence, a refusal to think of this as more than comic books. ***Marvel Year-In-Review '93*** refuses to take all this funnybook stuff too seriously, or worry too much about little details like continuity.

*Speaking of little details: while I've got the chance, though, I would like to echo the sentiment expressed in this book: who the heck are the Upstarts and the Acolytes? I thought that they were the same team until recently. It's nice to be able to come out in the open and say that these are characters that are fully deserving of everything that **Marvel Year in Review** can dish out. Funny stuff, perfectly aimed.*

I never had much use for ***Marvel Year-In-Review*** when it was just a look back at Marvel's output in the previous year, because I'd already read Marvel's output for the previous year. That's one more reason why I appreciate the change in editorial direction. As editor Evan Skolnick said in this issue, "If you want Marvel news, you got ***Marvel Age***. If you want Marvel data, there's ***Marvel Universe Handbook***. If you want to know exactly what happened in all your favorite Marvel titles last year, then **buy them!!!** But if you want biting, acerbic satire, this is the only place to get it. Got it? **This magazine is supposed to be funny! Fuuunny! If you don't have a sense of humor, don't buy this!**"

Funny it is. Sometimes it's David Letterman-funny, sometimes it's ***Spy-Magazine***-funny, and sometimes it's Dave-Barry-funny—but it's always funny. If that sounds appealing to you, then you need to add ***Marvel Year-In-Review '93*** to your must-read list. It's that simple! I hope lots of you do just that; maybe the deservedly good sales will help Evan keep his job after all the Marvel writers and editors he pokes fun at read this issue...

Power of Shazam
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett:★★★★

*How long ago was it that DC announced the new **Shazam** hardcover by Jerry Ordway? Three years? Longer? Well, it's finally going to be arriving in stores in early January, which leaves only one question: was it worth the wait?*

Yup.

Okay, next review... What? You want to know more. Well, okay. It was <u>really</u> worth the wait. Honest. Hey would I kid you? This is, after all, from one of the guys who helped kill off Superman and played a very important role in bringing him back—and he also gave us several years of quality stories with The Big Red S. So, why shouldn't he do great with The Big Red Cheese; they're the same characters, aren't they?

Wrong.

One of the biggest misconceptions in modern comics is that Superman and Captain Marvel (or Shazam, if you prefer) are basically the same character. That's like saying that chocolate and vanilla are basically the same because they are both ice cream. Superman is an alien trying to make a home on Earth, born with powers and abilities that he has grown to learn to use for the benefit of mankind. Billy Batson, on the other hand, is your typical teenager who is suddenly given super-human abilities by a mystical figure of strange origin and even stranger purpose. Billy doesn't know what he is supposed to do with his powers—heck, he isn't even sure what his powers are—but he does know that when he becomes Captain Marvel he feels like he can do anything.

Fans will be amazed at the adolescent personality that Ordway is able to communicate; as you look at Captain Marvel in his muscular adult form, you still accept the fact that this is a young boy's mind piloting this massive physique. It gives the story a charm and a sense of wonder that's refreshing in this time of overly serious comics.

Captain Marvel was the creation of C.C. Beck, and it always had an overtone of fun to it. Even with the most serious of stories, Beck managed to add a flavor of childlike demeanor, making everyone, no matter what their age, feel like Billy Batson in a super world. That has been the challenge that has been put before every other creator to work with this character: how to keep it fun, without making it silly. Well, I'm glad that they finally went to Jerry Ordway...

***The Power of Shazam** is the hardcover graphic novel that will lead into the ongoing series to follow later in 1994. Ordway has obviously spent a lot of time working on this project. That isn't a criticism of how late the volume is, but rather an acknowledgement of how sharp the book looks and reads. Ordway has fully painted every page, which adds a luxurious color to every page, while still retaining Ordway's crisp art style and storytelling. A beautiful book.*

And he won me over visually from the first time I saw Ordway's version the good Captain in action... for there, plainly visible for all the world to see, were wrinkles! Yes, this isn't another saran-wrap-and-spandex costume, but a heavy cloth uniform with form, texture, and

THE REIGN OF TOMORROW
SHE'S MAD AS HELL
AND SHE'S NOT GOING TO TAKE IT ANYMORE.
A FOUR-ISSUE MINISERIES
WRITTEN BY ROGER STERN
WITH ART BY JUNE BRIGMAN AND JACKSON GUICE
SUPERGIRL
...BEGINS IN DECEMBER
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wrinkles! I've often lamented the passage of the fabric costume from comics; it's nice to see its return. This is just one little touch that I can particularly appreciate; the entire book has the classic design and illustration sense that Ordway brings to everything he draws.

If you aren't familiar with Captain Marvel, then check out this hardcover for sure. If you thought that Captain Marvel was only Superman revisited, then remember that this is by one of the men responsible for some of the best comics of the past decade in the pages of Superman (and prepare to find out that Cap isn't superman in red). If you're a fan of Captain Marvel's don't panic, Ordway's done the old man justice.

Ogre 1
Cliff: ★★
Brett:★★

The first four or five pages of ***Ogre*** may remind you of any of a number of horror films made in the past few years; there's a little titillation, a lot of violence, and an appropriately monstrous protagonist who is, it turns out, the most sympathetic character in the book. Don't let the first few pages fool you, though; while ***Ogre*** does seem to draw its inspiration from a number of horror films, the comic book is more than just an imitation of the genre.

The story is pretty straightforward: a scientist has experimented on a method to alter human DNA by combining it with a cellular "soup" that contains the essence of other living creatures. Mark is just one of the scientist's victims... but he seems to be the only one who isn't blindly obedient to Dr. Blackwell. The not-so-good doctor wants Mark back—and he also wants Mark's girlfriend Susan, who he intends to use as the subject of his next experiment.

Phil White's story calls on a number of horror archetypes: there's the evil scientist, the innocent woman in distress, the good kid caught in the middle of events he doesn't understand... but the story goes beyond the basic archetypes to become a capably crafted comic book tale. By the time I had reached the end of the first issue, I had to immediately latch onto a copy of the second book to find out what happened next—and that's always a good sign.

Come on, you just wanted to know what happened to the girl. Wait a second, that was me, not you...never mind. I agree with your assessment. This is a great B-grade horror-adventure flick. It reminds me of something that Full Moon Entertainment would put out. You know the type, lots of fun for minimal effort. And there isn't a thing wrong with that...

Pete Ayala's artwork shows a great deal of promise; his work isn't totally polished yet, but he shows a very strong storytelling sense and an ability to draw something other than overmuscled superheroes. And judging from the color xeroxes I've seen, colorist Michael Masonet knows has a very good sense of color design; he colors a page without overcoloring it, and that's noteworthy in itself.

Ogre isn't a groundbreaking series, but it is a well-told, entertaining horror-adventure title. If you're a fan of the genre, give this one a try.

Green Lantern 49
Cliff: ★★★
Brett:★★★

As a long-time ***Green Lantern*** fan, I'm not sure whether or not I'm happy with the new direction DC has planned for the series. I grew up with the Hal Jordan Green Lantern (in fact, ***Green Lantern #6*** was one of the first comics I read; from that point on, I was hooked on Hal), and I'm not wholly pleased to see him undergo such a radical change. My response is akin to my disappointment at seeing the Barry Allen Flash designated as virtually the *only* hero at DC who is going to remain dead. Nevertheless, if I ignore for the moment my personal fondness for the character, I have to admit that the major changes that are in store for Green Lantern in the next couple of months make for some pretty exciting and significant comics reading.

Ron Marz is totally revamping ***Green Lantern***—and anyone who doubts that has but to read ***Green Lantern #49*** to see that the changes hinted at in the first installment of "Emerald Twilight" are more than superficial. Before this storyline is over, Green Lantern has gone beyond destroying his oldest enemy to

"NIGHT."
"THIS IS MY TIME."
"THE TIME I TRULY LIVE..."
"WHEN NO ONE CAN SEE MY FACE..."
"THE FACE OF..."
OGRE
"AGAIN I FIND MYSELF HERE... STUDYING SUSAN'S HOUSE."
R.I.P. PHIL WHITE
™ &©1993 White & Ayala

Green Lantern 49

TRUST ME ON THIS ONE. YOU GOT OFF EASY TONIGHT. YOU WON'T, NEXT TIME. I GUARANTEE IT.
STOP--!
YOU DON'T SEEM TO THINK MUCH OF OUR MASKED BENEFACTOR, COMMISSIONER.
I DON'T LIKE VIGILANTES... MUCH LESS ONES WHO HAVE MORE POWER THAN THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH.
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Batman: In Darkest Knight

brutally defeating his closest friends; it's not a gentle story, and it's not the sort of thing that can be written away in an issue or two. Hal Jordan's rage leads him to commit heinous acts that will be all but impossible to atone for; like it or not, it looks like Kyle Rayner is going to be the next Green Lantern... because the current GL can never be the hero he once was.

I'm not sure that we won't be using the word "villain" in place of "hero" to describe Hal from now on. Sure, it's possible that he'll have a sudden attack of sanity and return to his old ways—but for the time being, he is on a rampage that seems to be headed towards destruction. It seems strangely familiar to see this happening to another character that Ron Marz is working on—see the current **Thor** *storyline if you don't understand—but for some reason, it seems that Hal is going through a greater change. I guess it might be that Green Lantern has become such a strong figure in comics to me; no matter how much I like Thor, this* **Green Lantern** *storyline already has me dreading the inevitable outcome. I desperately want to read the next issue, already hoping to see Hal get better, even though I know that he isn't going to.*

While Green Lantern may not be as significant a hero as Batman or Superman, the changes that are in store for the hero in this three-part storyline are every bit as ground-breaking as the events of **Doomsday** or **Knightfall**. Don't let it pass you by!

Batman: In Darkest Knight
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett:★★★★★

And now, continuing in a **Green Lantern** *vein...*

*I've said this before, and I'm sure I'll say it again: Batman inspires great stories. Some characters are just more prone to make writers turn out quality work, and Batman is undoubtedly towards the top of that list. That doesn't meant hat every Batman story is great one, or even a good one, but it does mean that there seem to be more great stories done per capita using Batman than any other character in comics today. Of course, this is a all leading up to the fact that another great book has come out—***Batman: In Darkest Knight***.*

Anybody who knows anything about **Green Lantern** *has probably figured out the premise behind this book already, the idea that Bruce Wayne is chosen as the new Green Lantern to replace Abin Sur in sector 2814 (better known as Earth to us humans). Anybody who knows DC Comics is probably aware that this classifies* **In Darkest Knight** *as an Elseworlds book (which feature perhaps the best ideas in comics in the past five years).*

There is a common misconception that DC's Silver Age heroes were cookie-cutter characters without a distinct personality; the fact that the concept of a Bruce Wayne Green Lantern would have been jarring even thirty years ago clearly shows that this wasn't the case then. It most certainly isn't the case now, either. Even with the major changes affecting Hal Jordan (see the previous review if you've forgotten what I'm talking about), it's clear that Hal Jordan differs greatly from Bruce Wayne in motivation, method, and mentality.

The book is written by Mike Barr and illustrated by Jerry Bingham. Both are veterans of the Batman character, and prove that they are still some of the best talent for the character with this book. The plot for the book revolves around Bat Lantern (or whatever we want to call him) finding out that his view of justice doesn't necessarily amount to much in a cosmic scale. Batman has always been a character who was driven to act upon the individuals in society. He isn't the sort that would confront a galactic threat by choice; he would much prefer finding the man who killed the individual, and not the individual who would kill all mankind. Green Lantern is just the opposite. He is the sort who faces the challenge of the world beater, and fights to save everyone—sometimes losing track of the individual (if my Denny O'Neil/ Neal Adams serves me correctly). So what happens if you try to combine the two?

You get a heck of a good story, that's what. This is a Green Lantern who is ready to rebel against the Guardians—his Green Lantern masters—from the outset. He is still caught up in a world of individual horror, and not the idea of a universal hero. He is rash, brazen, and obstinate—in short, everything that the Green Lanterns aren't supposed to be. He is forced to deal with the world threat though, in the form of Sinestro—who immediately vows revenge.

Let's face it: Batman wasn't initially motivated by altruism. His crimefighting was an outward manifestation of a very personal vendetta; he took on criminals who menaced common men and women, not world-beaters who talked of intergalactic conquests.

Of course, Bat Lantern himself might have a few internal problems to deal with as well. Commissioner Gordon is very quick to notice that this is a man who might not be able to handle the degree of power that he has been given. The close friendship that was shared between Bruce Wayne's alter ego and the Police Commissioner never forms in this reality, and that adds an entirely new perspective tot eh book. In fact, Barr has done a magnificent job of creating a divergent parallel for both the Green Lantern and Batman characters. It is easier to follow the Batman line because of Bruce Wayne's role in the book, but the revised attitude towards the Guardians also adds a new slant to the Green Lantern character. When Barr is in form, there are few writers who can match his work—and this is Barr at his best.

Jerry Bingham doesn't slouch on is part of the job, though. This is easily Bingham's best work since **Son of the Demon**. *It seems natural for an artist whose work was influenced by the great Neal Adams to be doing a story that combines both Green Lantern and Batman—perhaps Adams' most remembered characters. Not to say that Bingham is only living in Adams' shadow, because his work stands alone very well...*

This book is made of little touches. The nod to this classic tale here, the acknowledgement of what never was there, everything. Batman: In Darkest Knight is a classic tale of the Batman, or maybe Green Lantern, or maybe it should just be thought of as a classic tale—no conditions should apply.

Last Week *CSN* featured the December Hot Picks.

Next Week *CSN* will feature a surprise interview.

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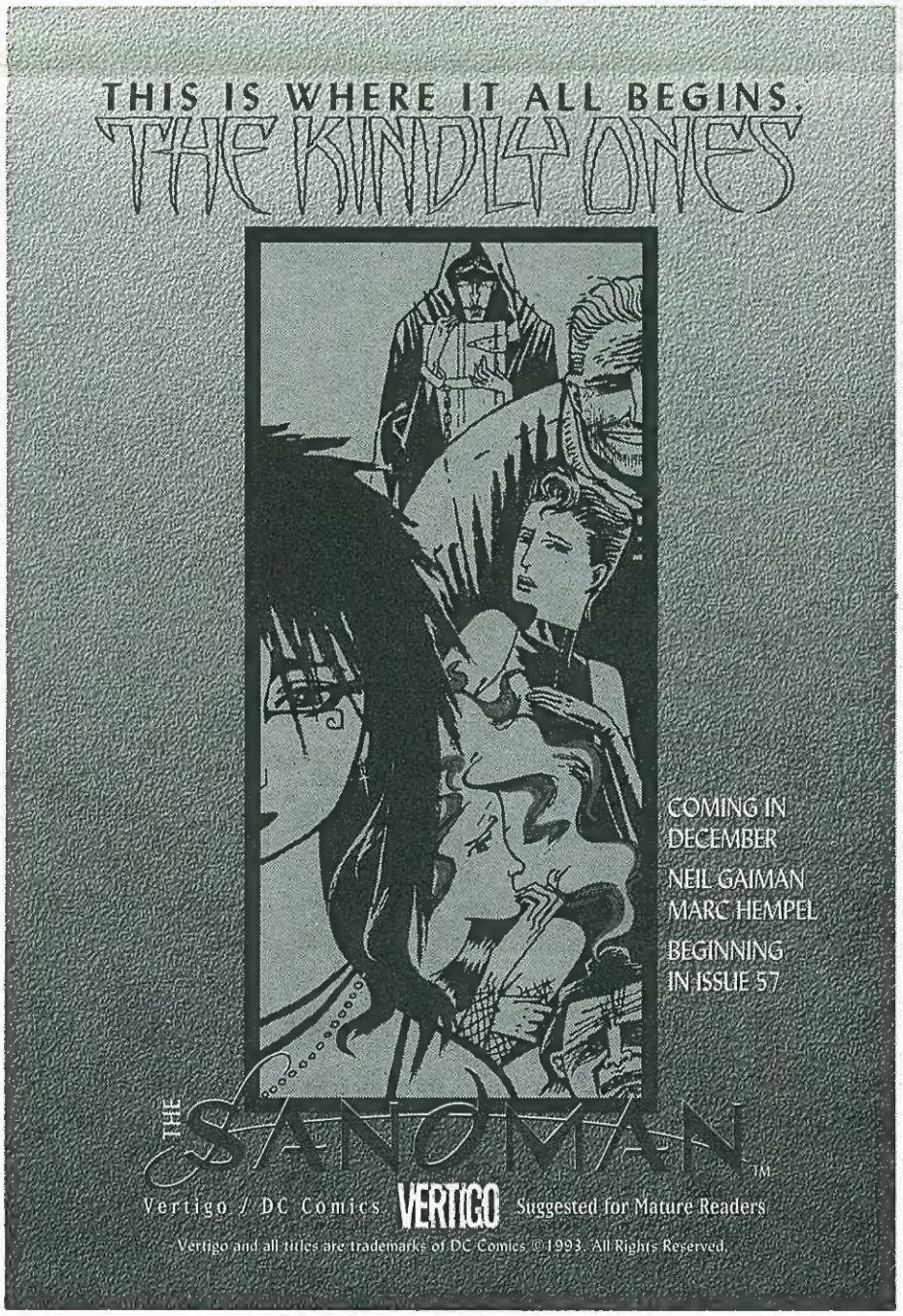
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THE KINDLY ONES
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NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
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